

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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APPROVED - JACALHOUN
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Memorandum of Conversation

LIMIT DISTRIBUTION

DATE July 10, 1959

SUBJECT: Harriman-Khrushchev Conversations

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Averell Harriman
The Secretary of State
Mr. C. Douglas Dillon, Under Secretary of State
Mr. Robert Murphy, Deputy Under Secretary of State
Mr. Livingston T. Merchant, Assistant Secretary for European Affairs
Mr. Foy D. Kohler, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs
SOV - D. E. Boster

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EUR White House
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After expressing regret at the leaking of information concerning his interview with Khrushchev, Mr. Harriman said he very much hoped that there would be no disclosure of one inference he had drawn from the talks--his conclusion from the clear distinction Khrushchev had made in talking of Soviet "rocket" progress--that the Soviets did not have much confidence in the present capability of their long range missiles. He recalled that Khrushchev early in his conversation had referred to Soviet ability to destroy European cities and U.S. overseas bases but had not included American cities in these statements. Later, he had boasted that if the Soviets spent 30 billion rubles on ballistic missiles over the next five or six years, they could destroy every industrial center in Europe and the United States. He thought that disclosure of this conclusion would be damaging to us if the Europeans thus gained the impression that we felt secure from devastation while they were not.

Mr. Harriman said he felt that Khrushchev's performance had been all bluff. But he was a man of many misapprehensions who might over-play his hand. Although we should not take too seriously his flamboyant arrogance, it was true that Khrushchev thought he had us over the barrel tactically (an idea which Mr. Harriman repeatedly emphasized). He thought that he could end our rights in Berlin by signing a piece of paper, and we would be the ones to move our tanks and accept the onus of war. He also undoubtedly reasoned that we had not had the courage to act with force in 1948 and would not have it again today.

Mr. Harriman said he felt that Khrushchev had probably made some commitment to help Ulbricht in East Germany and was anxious to have us concede some

acceptance

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acceptance of the reality of East Germany as part of a deal with the Soviets. Khrushchev did not take seriously our protestations that we really want German reunification. Mr. Harriman said he would like to see us get out of the negotiations over Berlin and move into disarmament negotiations. He thought this might be fruitful as there has been indications that Khrushchev felt his armaments were costing too much.

Khrushchev had seemed in good health, Mr. Harriman observed. He had drunk a great deal and had eaten everything, although sparingly.

Mr. Harriman indicated his feeling that a summit conference might be a good idea. Khrushchev was a genial personality and would enjoy it. The President, too, might enjoy it if the conference were not taken too seriously. Some progress might be made in disarmament, he thought.

There were two points that he had emphasized to Khrushchev, Mr. Harriman said. First, that the American people, both Republicans and Democrats, were solidly behind the President; and, secondly, that he could not take Khrushchev's statements seriously. He had told Khrushchev that he had seen the great things the Soviets were doing and he could not believe he would jeopardize this. He had assiduously refrained, Mr. Harriman said, from probing Khrushchev on any points but he thought it would be desirable for the Vice President to be primed to do this.

Mr. Harriman said he would summarize his main impressions as these: (1) Khrushchev's present lack of confidence in his missiles; (2) his desire to bolster the East German regime; (3) the possibility of progress in disarmament. His advice, he said, would be to keep the conversations going with the Soviets and not to issue ultimatums to them, as Khrushchev was an impetuous man whose reaction to ultimatums might be unpredictable.

Mr. Harriman criticized Chancellor Adenauer for his overly-rigid views on the current German problem—he wanted everything and would give up nothing. Adenauer believed that Moscow and Peking were suspicious of one another, that the Soviet virgin lands were a dust bowl, and that Soviet industrial strength was highly over-rated.

Replying to the Secretary's question as to whether he thought Kozlov was the heir apparent, Mr. Harriman said he did. He quoted Khrushchev as saying that this was a point on which he and Mikoyan were agreed. "We have decided on our successor--Kozlov," he had said. Khrushchev had been very definite about this, Mr. Harriman thought.

Mr. Harriman recounted an episode which had impressed him. When he had suggested to Khrushchev that if Mikoyan caused too much trouble he should be sent to the United States instead of to Siberia, Mikoyan emphatically interjected that it was no longer possible to be sent to Siberia. This had impressed Mr. Harriman as sincere, and he felt in general that the one encouraging thing he had seen in the USSR had been this greater sense of relaxation.

The Secretary

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The Secretary asked if Mr. Harriman thought that water was a problem for the Soviets in the virgin lands. Mr. Harriman said he thought it was but that the Soviets were attacking the problem in a number of ways and were having some success with their method of holding snow cover during the winter.

Mr. Murphy asked Mr. Harriman's impression about Soviet relations with Communist China. Mr. Harriman replied that Khrushchev had been very upset at Senator Humphrey for suggesting that these relations were not good. Khrushchev had pointed to China's plans for expanding food production and had noted that, if there were still trouble, the Soviets could always cut down some of the vast timber lands that Harriman had seen to help feed China.

Mr. Harriman returned again to his concern at the seriousness of the leak of his conversation, suggesting that he perhaps would not be permitted to return to the Soviet Union. The Secretary said that we shared his concern but were convinced the leak had not been from the Department. Mr. Murphy asked if Mr. Harriman had any evidence to believe the leak had come from the Department and Mr. Harriman said he had not except that he had assumed it was on the basis of the notes he had left with Ambassador Thompson. Mr. Merchant assured him that this could not have been the case as these notes had not left his desk until after the publication of the Alsop article. It was agreed that the leak must have been on the basis of the earlier cables received on this subject from Moscow.

In leaving, Mr. Harriman adverted again to a summit meeting, indicating that Khrushchev had told him to tell the President that he would not come to such a meeting to endorse the status quo but would come to a meeting to have a good time and enjoy it.